

New Tests Find No Link Between Race and IQ

9-4-71

By Stuart Auerbach
Washington Post Staff Writer

Two psychologists, working independently, reported yesterday that any differences in intelligence and achievement test scores between whites and minority groups is due to social and economic factors.

Their findings clash with the controversial conclusions of California psychologist Dr. Arthur R. Jensen and physicist Dr. William Shockley that blacks are genetically inferior to whites.

"These papers refute Shockley and Jensen," said Dr. Edward J. Casavantes, a staff member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights who headed a panel discussion at the annual meeting here of the American Psychological Association. "These will give ammunition to the other side (against Shockley and Jensen) for the first time," he added.

The studies were done by Dr. Jane R. Mercer of the University of California in Riverside and Dr. George W. Mayeske of the federal government's Office of Education. The studies were different. Mrs. Mercer looked at intelligence tests while Mayeske studied achievement tests. Both used different methods, and neither knew of the other's studies.

But at the end, both reached the same conclusions: race and ethnic background have nothing to do with intelligence or scholastic achievement. "This new evidence from two separate and independent studies is the strongest ever presented documenting that environmental and social factors affect test scores," said Casavantes.

"Many social scientists have always felt there were no basic intelligence differences between racial and ethnic groups, but until now there has been an absence of scientific data."

"I was quite excited to find that Dr. Mayeske reached identical findings by completely different methods," said Mrs. Mercer.

Her seven-year, \$375,000 study focused on Mexican-American and black students in Riverside who were classified as mentally retarded.

She found that many of these students, though scoring low on IQ tests and listed as mentally retarded, "were very intelligent in their behavior in the community."

Instead of measuring their intelligence, Mrs. Mercer found, the IQ tests were influenced by the socioeconomic conditions of the Mexican-Americans and the blacks.

These Mexican-Americans and blacks, for example, whose families were like middle-class white Americans in Riverside, had IQs that matched the whites. Those who lived in crowded, substandard housing, whose parents didn't speak English and who weren't expected to do well in school, fared badly on the IQ tests.

"The IQ test as it now stands," she said, "measures 20 per cent to 30 per cent cultural background."

"Although genetic factors undoubtedly produce differences in ability within various ethnic groups, the difference between the average test scores of black and Chicano Mexican-American students and the scores of white middle-class students can be accounted for by environmental factors," she concluded.

Mrs. Mercer, over the past seven years, has studied 1,500 students in the Riverside public schools. She said yesterday she would hesitate to draw such sweeping conclusions from her findings if Mayeske had not come up with identical results from a far larger, national sampling.

He studied achievement test results of 123,000 students from across the country that were pulled together by the federal government in 1965. This data was used then by John Hopkins psychologist James S. Coleman, who concluded that minority group children had suffered so much cultural deprivation by the time they reached school that no amount of education could bring them up to par.

Mayeske studied the achievement-test scores of sixth graders to find out why whites, on the average, did

better than the minority groups—Orientals, Indians, Mexican-Americans, Negroes and Puerto Ricans.

"The differences among the racial-ethnic groups approach zero as more and more considerations related to differences in their social conditions are taken into account," he reported.

The most important aspect, Mayeske found, was how much the student was motivated by his family to do well in school. "We intended to study the effect of race on test scores," he said, "and ended by studying the effect of racism on test scores."